

PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

The Economics of Primitive Life as
Illustrated from the Bantu Peoples
of South and East Africa

By

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INTRODUCTION

WITHOUT subscribing to any racial theories, we shall agree that there are great cultural differences between various sections of mankind. Nothing is more urgent than to achieve a clear comprehension of these differences, for only thus can we arrive at fundamental similarities. The principles of economics have been developed on the basis of Western life. Nothing is more important than to show whether they extend their validity to the more primitive cultures. This affords a testing-ground for economic theory which its exponents will doubtless welcome. It also should help in the enormous problem of making efficient contacts between ourselves and more primitive people in many distant parts of the world.

This book attempts something more. Co-operation between the various social sciences appears, to the author, to be a matter of extreme urgency. The day is past when this need can be met by each specialist doing a little light browsing in the works of his colleagues. It is very possible that progress is now to be made less through each specialist pursuing his own line of study, than by a consolidation and adjustment of work already done. Works on economics are full of problems upon which progress cannot be made until real working contact is established between economists and sociologists. Sociological studies require at every point, not merely advice from economists, though even this would always be useful, but active co-operation in every detail of the work.

Otherwise, we may see the spectacle of groups of students independently studying the same subject-matter—man in society—yet developing each his own terminology to such an extent that he can scarcely communicate scientifically with those who ought to be his fellow workers.

At the present stage of social science, the author is well

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aware, it is difficult to enunciate economic principles in a way acceptable or even intelligible to many expert sociologists, social anthropologists and social psychologists. It is equally difficult to bring the principles and discoveries of these latter specialists into effective relationship with economic theory. It is scarcely to be hoped that this book will, in itself, establish such a relationship. But a beginning must be made.

The vital and penetrating interest shown by Professor Malinowski in his analysis of the economic life of a primitive people virtually made possible the writing of this book. His sustained and unstinting help have made possible its completion.

He, as no other scholar, has made it clear that human life can be studied only by giving equal, and equally expert, attention to every aspect of that life. It is the author's hope that he has been of some service in the elucidation of the economic aspect. Only thus can a real acknowledgment be made to the work of a great teacher and inspirer.

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